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Ladies Auxiliary MPR VFD cruises to Alaska to fundraiser

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal



Courtesy Photo

Group photo of the Ladies Auxiliary MPR VFD aboard the ship.

The Ladies Auxiliary of MPR VFD gathered a group of 23 people for an Alaskan cruise, benefiting their year-round fundraising efforts. They booked the cruise through Carnival Spirit's special fundraising option, with Belton - Your Travel Agent. Each voyager pays a dollar amount extra per-day of the cruise, and Carnival matches that cost toward fundraising.

The Auxiliary invited anyone who wanted to join the adventure that began on Monday, Aug 17 and ended Tuesday, Aug 25. The adventure gave them tours in Seattle, Juneau, Ketchikan, Skagway, and Victoria, BC.

Karen Stagner, President of the Ladies' Auxiliary, explained they had people from Belton, Temple; and one guest who flew in from L.A. to join his dad on the cruise.

Rebecca Hutton, treasurer for the auxiliary said about the travel agency, "Doniece, had done a great job getting things organized, and we had an easy time going there and back, and it was fun to hang around and get to know some of the fellow people in the area."

Stagner said, "We bonded a lot of friendships. Got to share a lot of stories because once we're on the ship everyone goes their separate

See **AUXILIARY**, *Page A3*



Courtesy of Bell County Museum

An immersive 1920s fictional murder mystery tea adventure

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Murder on the Railway Express is coming to the old train depot, via Ruby Tearoom and collaboration with other businesses. Sara Nevarez and Kristie Whites, owners, said tickets are selling out. Tickets are for coach and first class while supplies last.

The immersive evening takes place on Thursday, Sept. 17 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. It begins with dinner at the Railway Express Diner.

Whites said, "Railway Express Diner will be starting with its own sampler platter for everyone at the table. For our first-class passengers, they'll also be getting a charcuterie spread as well. So, we have first class and we have coach tickets, same as you normally would on a train. So, the first class just gets you a little something extra at every stop."

She explained, "The whole scene takes place in the dining car. Once the murder happens, then there's a series of suspects. We break them all up into detective teams, and then they have to go on a hunt. They are given a detective's portfolio. They're given prompted questions, and then they have to go down the storyline of what happened, taking witness accounts and everything."

Railway Express: An Immersive Murder Mystery Tea Experience will have a newsie, played by Nevarez's son, Davy Nevarez. Her husband, Ryan, will also be play-

See **MYSTERY**, *Page A2*

County extends burn ban

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Fire risk at 674 on Keetch-Byram Drought Index

Continued hot and dry weather prompted Bell County Commissioners on Tuesday to extend a burn ban in unincorporated areas until Sept 24.

A previous burn ban expired at noon Tuesday.

"Conditions are ripe for wildfires," said Bell County Judge David Blackburn. "The county is at the upper end of the fire-risk scale."

Blackburn said the Keetch-Byram Drought Index is at 674 and increasing. That high of a rating will contribute to increase the risks of fires in the county.

"A person violates this order if he ignites or causes ignition of any combustible or vegetative material outside of an enclosure which serves to contain all flames and sparks, or orders such burning or ignition by others," he said.

The Keetch-Byram Drought Index, a tool used to estimate how likely wildfires are in an area. It measures how much moisture is in the ground by weighing ongoing dry conditions against recent rainfall.

The index runs from 0 to 800, with lower numbers showing moist soil and

See **BURN BAN**, *Page A5*

Local chef opens breakfast business in Belton

By Jack Freedman
The Belton Journal

On July 6, local chef and caterer Brandon Brigance opened a breakfast taco shop called Tacos o Muerte. This is Brigance's first entrepreneurial venture, and he is excited to share his craft with the City of Belton. Tacos o Muerte serves breakfast tacos, breakfast bowls, and homemade salsa. All food is made fresh and from scratch. It is currently located in the Valero gas station at 601 N Main St. from sunrise until 2 p.m. on weekdays.

"I serve Texas breakfast tacos with all your needs. There's home grown jalapenos, bacon, and smoked sausage. We have specials that rotate every week, which is really what I feel like making. This week I'm making brisket and egg tacos."

Brigance has worked in food services for the past 30 years, both in professional kitchens and in the catering business. He has worked in a variety of restaurants and services over the years, including barbecue, meat processing, and fine dining. Tacos o Muerte is the first business owned solely by Brigance.

"I'm originally from the San Antonio area and managed several restaurants, from fine dining to fast casual. That's where I got my culinary degree 30 years ago, and eventually I made my way here to Belton."

After many years of working in higher class restaurants, Brigance developed the desire to start a restaurant that catered to a more casual demographic.

"I've worked in fine dining, but after 30 years I got disillusioned with that," Brigance said. "I wanted to open something cozy and I feel like there's always a market for a better breakfast taco."

Belton has been a special place to Brigance and his wife, Alicia. The couple spent one of their first dates there and kept coming back to it. Ultimately they purchased a house in Belton after getting married.

"We fell in love with the town and joked about moving one day, but here we are," Brigance said. "We're just trying to make this place our home and have a successful business. Thankfully Tacos o Muerte has been really successful so far."

Since Brigance's business is relatively new, he and Alicia have plans for the future. Their goal is to one day move away from the gas station and lease a property for a standalone Tacos o Muerte.

"I got it at [Valero] because it was a decent lease," Brigance said. "The guys here are really cool, but I'm planning to get a standalone restaurant one day. I'm not where I want to be, but I feel like for now I'm where I need to be. Hopefully I'll be able to open on the weekends and incorporate it into the night life."



Courtesy photo

A breakfast taco featuring fresh egg, brisket, chiles, avocado, and onion from Tacos o Muerte.

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USCCA Holds Gun Safety Expo

By Jack Freedman
The Belton Journal

On Friday, August 28, from 4 to 6 p.m., several members of the United States Concealed Carry Association came to the Sendero Shooting Sports gun center in order to teach a class on when it is right to use force with a firearm entitled Legal Use of Force.

"We hope you never have to use lethal or non-lethal force, but we're here to teach you if God forbid it comes down to that," Glen Witwer, the main speaker from USCCA, said.

Throughout the lecture, Witwer covered several main points. These included legal use of force, the definition of deadly force, factors of disparity, how to deescalate a situation, and the different laws of how to handle an armed situation in each state.

"Whenever you're in a potentially deadly situation, you need to know what the limits of the law are," Witwer said.

Witwer explained that there are several factors of disparity that come with being the innocent party. Even if you were not the provoker, the size of the attacker can be a factor. If you are attacked by somebody who is smaller and weaker than you, it is best to try to deescalate the situation either verbally or by getting away before pulling out a gun.

Another principle that was talked about in the class was castle law. Castle law gives anyone the right to defend themselves while in the vicinity of their house or even their vehicle. While castle law is not present in all states, particularly the more liberal states, Texas gives you the right to stand your ground.

"It's also important to train yourself in case you're ever attacked," Witwer said. "My kids are varying ages, and I've made sure to teach them all gun safety. They know where the guns are, not to touch them, and what to do in case of an intruder."

The final point that Witwer talked about was what to do in case you have no choice but to use deadly force. His advice was to immediately call 911 and get a lawyer to testify for you. He finally talked about an insurance plan offered by the USCCA which covers legal fees in case such a thing happens.

"It probably won't happen to you, but if you have to defend yourself, you may end up spending thousands in legal fees," Witwer said.



BELTON JOURNAL/Jack Freedman
USCCA Representative Glen Witwer giving his lecture.

Before ending the class, the speakers advertised other classes offered by the USCCA. More information about them can be found at www.usconcealedcarry.com.

Texas Commission on the Arts announces call for nominations for State Poet Laureates, Musicians, Visual Artists

Special to the Journal

On behalf of the Texas Legislature, the Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) is seeking nominations for the positions of 2027 and 2028 State Poet Laureate, State Musician classical genre, State Musician nonclassical genre, State Artist two-dimensional media (i.e., painting, photography), and State Artist three-dimensional media (i.e., sculpture).

All Texas citizens are encouraged to make nominations, and self-nominations are accepted. Citizens can nominate more than one artist. The nomination form and complete information are available online at https://www.arts.texas.gov/initiatives/texas-state-artist/. The deadline for Texas State Artists nominations is October 15, 2026.

All qualified nominees must be native Texans or five-year residents of the state. They must be US citizens. Candidates must have received recognition for high levels of excellence and success in their respective disciplines. They also must have received critical reviews in state, regional or national publications.

Chosen artists will join the company of previous state artists such as Willie Nelson, Earlie Hudnall, Jr., Carrie Fountain, Dario Robleto, and Kathy Vargas, and will receive statewide recognition. Texas State Artists also have the opportunity to participate in TCA events and promotions, including participation on TCA's Texas Touring Roster and other initiatives in relation to their respective arts discipline.

"We are fortunate to have many outstanding artists in Texas, and we anticipate receiving numerous qualified nominations," said Gary Gibbs, executive director of TCA. "Being named a Texas State Artist is the Texas Legislature's highest honor for an artist, and it brings new career opportunities and recognition from the arts community and the general public."

TCA oversees the selection process for the five positions, in accordance with Chapter 3104 of the Texas Government Code. TCA issues the call for nominations, oversees an evaluation review process, and provides a list of finalists to the selection committee. The committee, composed of members appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, makes the final selections. The 90th Texas Legislature will make the appointments in spring 2027 when they are in session.

Scottish Gathering and Highland Games coming to Salado



Courtesy Photo
Scottish Gathering and Highland Games hosts a Parade of Bands and Clans.

Special to the Journal

The 65th Salado Scottish Gathering and Highland Games will be held November 13-15 on a beautifully wooded property beginning at 108 Royal Street in Salado, Texas. Heralding all things Scottish, this landmark event is the oldest Scottish festival in Texas and has been sponsored continuously by the Salado Museum since 1961.

The weekend's activities include bagpipe bands, athletes Tossing the Caber, Highland dancers, Scottish musicians, the popular Bonniest Knees Contest, Dog Costume Contest, Celtic marketplace, dog agility demos, food trucks, and more. The Clan Village is the largest gathering of Scottish Clans in Texas where members from 40 clans share information on Scottish history and genealogy.

All proceeds benefit the Salado Museum, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For more information and ticket prices: www.saladoscottishfestival.com or call 254-947-5232.

Mystery - From Page A1

ing a character in the evening's mystery. It also brings many of the Downtown businesses together as a backdrop as the events unfold.

Here are some of the business owners participating or providing space for the event. Rodriquez Automotive & Custom Detailing will park some 1920s Chevys in front of the depot for photo opportunities. Sandra Escalante, owner of Pinkies Bar & Grill, will be Pinky Prosecco, a jazz club owner. Sly Fox, not able to participate in the event, is letting them use one of the train cars.

It promises to be a fun night of dining and sleuthing.

Whites said, "Belton's my hometown. For me, the history of Belton and bringing in those concepts for those that have been here forever and for those that are new, to learn something. That's important to me. I have pride. I want to show that."

In her research at the Bell County Museum, Whites discovered that their 1920s Belton murder mystery immersion was not completely fiction. She said, "I went to the museum. I sat down with them. They pulled out the archives for me. I learned that there was an actual 1920s murder that happened at the depot. I got witness accounts for it, statements like the whole shebang."

Go to rubytearoom.com for tickets to this or other tea events. A few events coming up are Swiftea, Craftea, and Plant bingo partea.

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To be considered for inclusion in the Belton Journal, all submissions must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Monday of the week in question.

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OBITUARIES



Fagan

Pamela Gale Fagan
May 7, 1963 ~ Aug. 26, 2026

Pamela Gale Fagan, 63, of Belton, Texas, passed away surrounded by the love of her family.

Pamela was born May 7, 1963, in Harvey, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, to Ellen Elizabeth Millican and Jack Guess Jr. She married the love of her life, Phillip Fagan, on March 2, 1997. Pamela attended Central Texas College Nursing and dedicated much of her working life to serving others. She spent three years in the Army before working for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. In 2009, she became a Licensed Vocational Nurse, a career that reflected her caring nature and desire to help others.

Pamela was a woman who took great pride in her family and found her greatest joy in bringing them together. She loved to cook and especially cherished Sundays, when she would gather her children around the dining room table for family meals. Those Sundays were filled with laughter, games and the kind of memories that become treasured for a lifetime. Christmas was her favorite time of year, and she found great joy in giving to others. She also enjoyed reading. Above all, Pamela will be remembered for the love, generosity and care she shared with the people around her.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Jack Guess Jr. and Ellen Millican; her brother, Bill Guess; and her sisters, Peggy Arnold and Shirley Chavez.

She is survived by her husband, Philip Fagan; sisters Donna Willenberg and Regina Sanchez; sons Alberto Crespo, Jesus Crespo and Joshua Fagan; daughter Melissa Beckett; grandchildren Rachel Morris and her wife, Lauren (Schneider) Morris; Alyssa; Joshua Morris; and Hunter Sepeda, along with their families; and numerous nieces and nephews. She is also survived by her great-grand dogs, who brought additional joy to her family.

The family would like to extend a special thank you to Scott and White Hospital and all of its staff, with special appreciation for the hospice team, for their care and compassion.

Pamela's life was one of service, family and giving to others. Her memory will live on through the many lives she touched and, especially, through the family she loved so dearly. Service are pending.

Council reviews proposed strategic plan

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

City Manager Sam Listi presented City Council last week with a look at Belton's strategic plan for FY 2027-2031. The plan includes six "pillars" of emphasis through 2031.

These "pillars" include connectivity, economics, quality of life, infrastructure, engagement and public safety, Listi said. They contain 42 initiatives. Here are a few of those initiatives:

Connectivity — Critical street, trail and sidewalk projects such as Interstates 14 and 35, Loop 121 (phases 2 and 3), Sixth Avenue maintenance, FM 93 widening, analysis of extending Wheat Road, and Central/Spring Street bridge work.

Business Development — Work on utilities to Belton Economic Development Corporation properties, implement updated building codes, expand landscaping and murals, and employee recruitment and retention because of I-35/I-14 construction.

Quality of Life — Implement Parks and Library master plans, establish Data Center standards, and enhance Belton's historical cultural resources.

Infrastructure/Public Facilities — Water & Wastewater Master Plan, Central Texas Water Alliance participation, evaluate street maintenance fees, and a water/sewer boundary analysis.

Engagement — National Citizen Survey recommendations, provisions of exceptional customer service, community marketing plan, logo, tourism emphasis, and the roll out of a HOP bus for project evaluation and community engagement.

Public Safety — Miller Heights Center phased occupancy, employee mental health needs awareness, cybersecurity and AI training for community safety.

Adoption of the strategic plan is scheduled for Sept. 15.

Also at last week's meeting, Council proclaimed Aug. 30 as Back to School Prayer Day in Belton, and approved numerous zoning changes. Council also discussed proposed amendments to the FY 2027 Fee & Rate schedule.

New $138 billion investment planned for Texas transportation



Special to the Journal

Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) announced a new 10-year transportation plan with a total projected investment of $138 billion.

In a rapidly growing state, this transformational investment will help improve safety, reduce congestion and strengthen the supply chain.

"Texas' booming economy and growing population demand a transportation system that keeps people and products moving safely and efficiently," said Governor Abbott. "This $138 billion investment will strengthen our roadways, reduce congestion, improve safety, and support growing communities across Texas. By investing in critical infrastructure today, we are building a bigger, better Texas for generations to come."

"Working closely with our transportation partners and incorporating input from Texans, the UTP lays out a path to advance projects across the state," Texas Transportation Commission Acting Chair Alvin New said. "These investments will improve mobility, enhance connectivity, and make our roads safer for everyone. I want to thank Governor Abbott and the Texas Legislature for their commitment to funding projects that will connect you with Texas."

The Texas Transportation Commission approved the 2027 Unified Transportation Program (UTP) in its August meeting, which includes $95 billion for projects across the state over the next 10 years. The investment is supported by an additional $43 billion in development and routine maintenance.

"This 10-year plan reflects the scale and complexity of meeting Texas' transportation needs in one of the fastest-growing states in the nation," TxDOT Executive Director Marc Williams said. "It is focused on practical outcomes—improving safety, preserving the system we have, and supporting reliable movement for people and goods. With continued attention to project delivery, stewardship and long-term performance, these investments help position TxDOT to meet today's demands while planning responsibly for the future."

The UTP lays out a plan for project development to enhance safety, address congestion and connectivity, and preserve roadways for Texas drivers. The program also includes public transportation, maritime, aviation, rail, freight, international trade and bicycle and pedestrian connectivity. Learn more about the program in the UTP Fact Sheet.

Here are a few examples of projects in the Waco District area in the 2027 UTP:

$45 million for widening SS 298 (Franklin Avenue) in McLennan County from US 84 to SL 396 (Valley Mills Drive)

$223 million for the construction of the Hamilton relief route serving thru traffic on US 281 and SH 36

$675 million for the widening of IH 35 in Bell County from IH 14 (Belton) to SL 363 (Temple) to co-locate with the future IH 14

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Auxiliary - From Page A1

ways. When we get together and eat dinner, we share stories."

Rebecca Hutton, treasurer, said about the temperatures, "It was like 50s, 60s. It was amazing. It was suddenly rainy and foggy, but then it cleared up, and you got to see the beautiful scenery. We were standing out on our balcony and watching the whales and orcas come up out of the water and everything."

The Day activities some of the group took part in included a lumberjack excursion in Ketchikan and a train adventure on White Pass in Skagway.

They also enjoyed the temperatures never getting over 70 degrees, knowing the temperatures at home were above 100.

Stagner mentioned the whales seen on the way back from Ketchikan, "There were huge pods of whales. They have a nature naturalist on board, and she would continually announce when she would see different things out in the water."

Stagner said, "We appreciate the support of the people who went with us and that we've gotten to know. We're making lifelong friendships on these cruises."

The first fundraising cruise the Ladies Auxiliary MPR VFD took was in 2010.

Stagner said, "We look forward to, in '28, maybe doing a cruise, which would be the New England fall colors. Going up into Canada."

Stagner said, "We appreciate the support of the people who went with us and that we've gotten to know. We're making lifelong friendships on these cruises."

Stay connected to what the Ladies Auxiliary MPR VFD is doing by following their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/LadiesAuxiliaryMprvfd.

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Restoration project to benefit the Bell County Museum

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Belton City Council voted last week to use a portion of the Municipal Hotel Occupancy Tax to pay for a Bell County Museum restoration project. The City's cost for Fiscal 2026 is $40,000.

According to City Manager Sam Listi, Hotel Occupancy Tax funds are available for restoration and preservation projects that encourage tourists and others to visit preserved historic sites.

"Current year Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue would limit us in allocating the requested $85,000 in Fiscal 2026," Listi said.

"Apparently there is a state legislative limitation in the maximum amount of HOT money that may be used for historic restoration and preservation at 15 percent of annual revenues," he said. "We recommend approval of $40,000 now as a Phase 1 allocation to conduct a proposed Building Envelope Study and structural assessment, with a Phase 2 allocation in Fiscal 2027 for the remaining $45,000."

The museum — originally known as The Carnegie Building — has been a pillar of downtown Belton since 1905 when it was constructed through a grant from Andrew Carnegie's nationwide library initiative. The building served as the Belton Carnegie Library until 1975, when it transitioned to become the Bell County Museum.

Since the museum's 1975 opening, it has hosted thousands of visitors for educational programming, rotating exhibits, public events and school field trips. As one of the only free museums in the region, the Bell County Museum serves as an accessible resource for residents, students, researchers and tourists.

Today, the building serves as both a historic landmark and an active center for community gatherings. After more than a century of service, the building is experiencing age-related deterioration as well as weather-related damage that threatens its long-term structural stability, Listi said.

"To secure the integrity of the historic building, Bell County has requested funding for the Bell County Museum restoration project, which will ensure that the building continues to serve residents of Bell County and beyond for years to come," he said.

Museum staff and county maintenance professionals have identified several interior and exterior concerns, indicating possible structural issues with the building. These concerns include cracking along interior walls, gaps between structural piers, signs of floor movement and settling, and water intrusion from severe storms in 2024 and 2025.

Without the project, termite damage, wood rot, foundation movement or moisture intrusion likely will continue to worsen, necessitating emergency repairs in the future.

Between 2018 and 2025, the Museum hosted more than 75,000 visitors, including 8,000 students who visited on field trips. The Museum's programming and exhibits offer hands-on education opportunities,

The project is expected to yield both immediate and long-term benefits to the community, as well as accelerate the preservation efforts of local history.

Funding will not only preserve the historically significant building, but will allow the Museum to continue to offer its free educational and cultural programming. Without funding, the Museum may be forced to allocate larger portions of its funding toward building repairs, reducing the funds available for education and community programming.

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS AND PARTIES:

Michels Road & Stone, Inc., has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for:

Issuance of Permit 185044

This application would authorize construction of a Rock Crushing Facility located at 16680 Moody Leon Road, Moody, Bell County, Texas 76557. This application is being processed in an expedited manner, as allowed by the commission's rules in 30 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 101, Subchapter J. Additional information concerning this application is contained in the public notice section of this newspaper.

LOSS Team's view of denial

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

September is suicide prevention awareness month and the Central Counties Services Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS) Team is at the forefront. With prevention education, James (Randy) Dixon, program specialist, shared a common perspective of suicide is it will never happen to me.

The LOSS Team supports those who have lost someone by suicide, but they also teach the symptoms of someone thinking of suicide.

Dixon said, "When we hear that someone has died by suicide, it can be very easy to create distance between their family and our own. Somewhere in our minds, we may think, 'That could never happen in my family.'"

He explained these thoughts are understandable, but suicide does not belong to one type of person.

Dixon said, "Suicide can touch families that are close and loving and where mental health struggles are openly discussed. It can affect people who are successful.

He said to realize it can happen to someone you love and suggests to think, " I want to know what to look for and what to do."

He explained there is a myth that a suicidal person looks depressed or is crying constantly. Although these can be symptoms, Dixon clarified, "A person struggling with suicidal thoughts may still go to work or school. They may laugh at a joke."

Knowing people can conceal their emotional pain and are likely ashamed or frightened by their own thoughts, they may need help to express the need for help.

Dixon said someone who is talking about no one caring if they disappear or people being better off without them, is not to be dismissed as teenage drama, frustration, or attention-seeking. He warns not to panic but to have a conversation.

Dixon suggests asking, "Are you thinking about suicide?" But adds saying, "You wouldn't actually hurt yourself, right?" encourages your loved one to say, "no."

Dixon said, "Asking for help is one of the strongest decisions a person can make."

He explained it is difficult for the loved one to see possible solutions or that change can happen in their painful situation. The LOSS Team training teaches how to help your family member or friend have a different thought for a moment.

Dixon sees suicide prevention classes as valuable as CPR, fire safety, and wearing seat belts. He said, "We prepare because emergencies happen, and knowing what to do can save a life."

The LOSS Team - Central Counties Services training events are listed on www.EventBrite.com, or contact Randy Dixon by phone at 254-298-7038 or email at Randy.Dixon@CCS1967.org.

Events coming up are Ride, Roll, Remember Central Texas, on Sept. 26 and Hope Walks on Oct. 3. And a Candlelight Vigil Sept. 24 630pm to 730pm TBA. AS+K Prevention trainings are on Sept. 18, and Oct. 23. Safety Planning-Calm Training is on Sept. 4. Safety Planning/ Columbia CSSRS training is on Oct. 9.



Nominations open, 25th Annual H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards to give more than $1 million in cash prizes

Special to the Journal

Anyone can nominate an outstanding Texas educator until September 30

To commemorate 25 years of excellence in education, H-E-B will award more than $1 million in cash prizes to Texas educators and their schools through the 2027 H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards program. Nominations are now open, and anyone can nominate their favorite teacher, counselor, principal, school district, school board or early childhood facility and help them win their share of more than $1 million. Nominations are open until September 30, 2026 at HEBLovesTeachers.com/nominate.

Since the awards program began in 2002, H-E-B has awarded more than $15 million to outstanding Texas public school professionals who have gone the extra mile to serve their students and their communities.

"For 25 years, the H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards have celebrated Texas educators whose commitment reaches far beyond the classroom," said Winell Herron, H-E-B Senior Vice President of Public Affairs, Diversity and Environmental Affairs. "Their dedication to strengthening our communities and preparing the next generation of Texas leaders reflects the very best of public education. In this milestone year, H-E-B is proud to increase our investment in the people and institutions driving meaningful, long-term impact across Texas."

The increased cash prizes for 2027 winners and their schools are:

The Rising Star Award—one elementary and one secondary teacher with less than 10 years of experience will receive a $10,000 check for themselves and a $10,000 check for their schools.



The Leadership Award—one elementary and one secondary teacher with 10 to 20 years of experience will receive a $15,000 check for themselves and a $15,000 check for their schools.

The Lifetime Achievement Award—one elementary and one secondary teacher with more than 20 years of experience will receive a $30,000 check for themselves and $30,000 check for their schools.

Two counselors—one elementary and one secondary—each will receive a $15,000 check for themselves and a $20,000 check for their school.

Two principals—one elementary and one secondary—each will receive a $15,000 check for themselves and a $30,000 check for their school.

One early childhood facility will receive $50,000.

One school board will receive $50,000.

One small school district will receive $75,000.

One large school district will receive $150,000.

All state-certified public school educators currently teaching in Texas are eligible for the awards program, as well as Texas early childhood education centers/schools. Eligibility is not dependent on proximity to H-E-B store locations. Educators who are nominated will receive an invitation to apply before November 1, 2026. While a nomination is not required to apply for an award, a nomination lets an educator know they are appreciated and should apply for the awards program. Finalists and winners will be selected by a panel of judges composed of educators, administrators and community leaders throughout the state. Ten winners—six teachers, two counselors and two principals—along with an early childhood facility, public school board and two school districts, will be announced at an awards ceremony in Austin in Spring 2027. Each award recipient's school will also receive a matching grant.

About the H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards

Each year, the H-E-B Excellence in Education

See **HEB**, Page A5



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Burn ban - From Page A1

little fire risk, and higher numbers showing very dry conditions and a much greater fire danger.

If Bell County receives substantial rainfall, Blackburn can lift the ban.

Also Tuesday, Commissioners approved nominations for the Bell County Museum board of trustees.

Nominees include Cyd Shine West and Danny Dunn, who will begin the first three-year terms, and Melissa Bohannon, David Chrisman, Kathy Denton and Helen Pickle, who will begin their second three-year terms.

Board terms begin Oct. 1.

In other action, Commissioners:

Amended a contract with TWG Investments — aka The Wood Group — for staffing of direct-care services at the Diversion Center in an amount not to exceed $446,580.

Accepted a $140,000 grant from the Texas Veterans Commission's Fund for Veterans' Assistance.

Accepted a $400,000 grant from the Fund for Veterans' Assistance for financial assistance for veterans.

Received Commissioners Education Certificates of Completion for calendar year 2026 from Precinct 2 Commissioner Bobby Whitson and Precinct 3 Commissioner Greg Reynolds.

Approved the final plat of Abraham Plaza, a 7.201-acre, two lot subdivision located in Salado's ETJ.

Approved the final plat of The Preserve, a 2.02-acre subdivision located in Precinct 3.

Approved the final plat of the Rosebud Road Addition, a 1.756-acre subdivision, also in Precinct 3.

Authorized an eight-month contract with Freese & Nichols Inc. for the Wild Mountain area low-water crossing improve-

138 Billion - From Page A3

extension.

Many of the projects in the 2027 UTP are roadway segments identified on Texas' 100 Most Congested Roadways list. Texas Clear Lanes congestion-relief projects funding will increase, supporting the $90.6 billion total investment for completed, under-construction and planned non-tolled projects since 2015. The plan also supports a significant investment in safety and increases funding for rural corridors and key economic hubs.

The Commission adopted the UTP after an extensive process to allow the public to voice comments and opinions on the projects listed in the document. More information on comments received and the public involvement process can be found at txdot.gov.

Contact Jake Smith, TxDOT Waco District Public Information Officer at Jacob.Smith@TxDOT.gov or 254-366-7673

HEB - From Page A4

Awards program awards cash prizes to honor outstanding public school professionals, and to thank them for their dedication and commitment. Through this program, H-E-B seeks to pay tribute to those educators who go the extra mile every day to serve their students and their communities and who inspire others to do the same.

Since the program's inception in 2002, H-E-B has awarded more than $15 million in funding to outstanding Texas teachers, counselors, principals, public schools, early childhood centers, school boards and school districts. A longtime supporter of public education, H-E-B answers the call by donating more than $12 million each year to Texas education initiatives.

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CarFit helps seniors maintain driving independence

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

CarFit is coming to the 16th Annual Bell County Senior Expo on Sept. 22, with an interactive experience for the mature driver. Designed to help protect the driver's life and body from traumatic injuries behind the wheel they address line of sight, seat belt placement, and more.

Kristen McBride, a nurse and trauma injury prevention coordinator for Baylor Scott and White Medical Center in Temple, said, "I do a lot of community outreach with different injury prevention initiatives, and safe driving is one of them. Janet has the mature driver safety program, and trained me to be one of the coordinators. She does these presentations all the time."

Janet Hoelscher, with Texas A&M AgriLife, the mature driver program, said, "I am the state coordinator for CarFit for the state of Texas. Which means that I attend meetings with everyone in all the other 50 states about CarFit. We work together to help make CarFit better."

As drivers age, their height and flexibility change.

Hoelscher continued, "CarFit is a fast, fun, and free way to learn how well your vehicle fits you. This program explores strategies to improve your safety and mobility behind the wheel."

To assure drivers, this program exists to keep drivers on the road, not take them off it.

McBride said, "About the program, there's nothing punitive about it. We are not here to assess their driving skills, and certainly not here to take their canes away."

Hoelscher said, "As we age, things start changing, and driving injuries are a risk. So, the changes in vision, flexibility, strength, height, and range of motion can reduce a person's comfort and control on the road. CarFit can help a person maintain their independence."

Because many households have more than one driver for the same vehicle, CarFit teaches drivers what they need to know to adjust for them.

Hoelscher said, "We teach individuals how to make the adjustments themselves, so if someone changes anything they can change the settings back. Everyone needs adjustments specifically for them. We teach them how to adjust it themselves."

CarFit was developed in 2006 by AARP and the Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) to help drivers stay comfortable and safer on the road longer. CarFit is a TxDOT grant-funded program employed by Texas A&M University.



Courtesy Photo
UMHB OT Technician training CarFit event at Sammons Community Center in Temple in March.

CarFit was designed for those 55 and older but CarFit is for anyone who drives a vehicle. They have seen it help drivers 16 and up. If you can't make it to the Senior Expo event, CarFit can be invited to your organization, church, or other regular gathering place. Visit their website at car-fit.org. For more information on Bell County SR Expo, see flyer on Page A8.

An invitation for the communi-tea

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Ruby Tearoom's mission to bring the community together is inviting everyone to join Ruby Tearoom's 2nd birthday celebration. Owners Kristie Whites, a Belton native and tea master, and Sara Nevarez, former pastry chef at the Texas Motor Speedway and sous chef at the Dallas World Trade Center, have curated some fantastical new items to reveal at the party.

It will be held on Friday, Sep. 4, starting at Noon until 2 p.m. at 126 N East St. Downtown Belton. The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce and the Temple Chamber of Commerce will kick off the event with a ribbon-cutting.

Starting as a mobile company in 2024 they started holding tea parties inside Arusha in Jan. 2025 To date they have hosted over 100 tea events.

Whites said, "Arusha and Ruby complement each other as partners. We have the same fundamental mission and values. That was something that drew me, that made me so happy to be here."

Whites and Nevarez, who met in Waco while attending McLennan Community College as theater majors, say their mission is bringing people together over tea. Whites explained Ruby Tearooms is a traditional English service-based tea room.

She said, "We do traditional English services, typically seven, but we offer four. So we have a cream tea service. We offer scones, clotted cream, some fresh fruit, some cookies, and a pot of tea."

Whites said, "Our mission is communi-tea. Everything we do is wrapped around that concept. We're not just about having tea parties. We want to bring the community together. Also, the tea puns never stop."

Nevarez said, "We have tried to roll out something new, but then we'll look at each other and we're like, is this actually going to feed into our mission? No. Then maybe we should either rethink it or maybe just not do it at all."

Whites serve their guests while Nevarez is in the kitchen creating from scratch their new, ever-changing monthly menus.

Customers can request Ruby Tearoom at another location.

Whites said, "We go on location because how we started was mobile. We would come to you. Have tea, will travel. It is still very much something we do."

Recently they served 150 people at a military memorial where Nevarez created an eight-foot charcuterie table. Four friends, each from a different state, came to tea to celebrate 70 years of friendship.



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weisman
Owners of RubyTearoom, Kristie Whites and Sara Nevarez, preparing for their two year celebration.

About their parties held in neighboring businesses, Whites said, "We believe in collaboration. The way to bring community together is just that. A flower doesn't compete with the flower next to it. It just blooms. And we want to help everybody around us bloom."

They hold one Communi-tea each month, a free event, with RSVP. Go to rubytearoom.com to find more information and to follow them on social media. Leftover food is donated to Feed My Sheep or to Hope House, and they compost their tea leaves.

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Nacho Libre
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SAT - Aug 29 @ 4:30
SAT - Aug 29 @ 7:30
SUN - Aug 30 @ 4:30
SUN - Aug 30 @ 7:30
A Minecraft Movie
SAT - Aug 29 @ 2:00
SUN - Aug 30 @ 11:30AM
SUN - Aug 30 @ 2:00
Stagecoach
WED - Sep 2 @ 7:00
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The Sound of Music
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FRI - Sep 4 @ 11:00AM
FRI - Sep 4 @ 3:00
FRI - Sep 4 @ 7:00
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SAT - Sep 5 @ 3:00
SAT - Sep 5 @ 7:00
SUN - Sep 6 @ 11:00AM
SUN - Sep 6 @ 3:00
SUN - Sep 6 @ 7:00
MON - Sep 7 @ 11:00AM
MON - Sep 7 @ 3:00
MON - Sep 7 @ 7:00
Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla
WED - Sep 9 @ 7:00
THUR - Sep 10 @ 7:00
My Neighbor Totoro
FRI - Sep 11 @ 7:00
SAT - Sep 12 @ 11:30AM
SAT - Sep 12 @ 2:00
SAT - Sep 12 @ 4:30
SAT - Sep 12 @ 7:30
SUN - Sep 13 @ 11:30AM
SUN - Sep 13 @ 2:00
SUN - Sep 13 @ 7:30
Titanic
WED - Sep 16 @ 6:30
THUR - Sep 17 @ 6:30
FRI - Sep 18 @ 6:30
SAT - Sep 19 @ 2:30
SUN - Sep 20 @ 3:30
SUN - Sep 20 @ 7:30
The Little Mermaid
SAT - Sep 19 @ 10:30AM
SAT - Sep 19 @ 12:30
SUN - Sep 20 @ 11:30AM
SUN - Sep 20 @ 1:30
Close Encounters of the Third Kind
WED - Sep 23 @ 7:00
THUR - Sep 24 @ 7:00
E.T. The Extraterrestrial
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The Broken Soul, the Living Spirit



John C. Perry

I heard the beautiful hymn *It Is Well With My Soul* recently. It is a powerful hymn on its own, but the story behind it makes the words almost breathtaking. Horatio Spafford (1821–1888) wrote it after a series of unimaginable losses: the death of his young son, the destruction of his business in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, and then the tragic death of his four daughters in an 1873 shipwreck.

While crossing the Atlantic to meet his grieving wife, Spafford's ship passed near the very waters where his daughters perished. It was there, in the shadow of profound sorrow, that he penned these unforgettable lines:

"Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, / Let this blest assurance control / That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate, / And hath shed His own blood for my soul."

Hearing that hymn made me reflect on a question many believers have asked: What is the difference between the **soul** and the **spirit**? Or are they essentially the same?

While interpretations vary across Christian traditions, Scripture offers a helpful and practical distinction.

In the Bible, the **soul** (Hebrew *nephesh,* Greek *psyche)* refers to our inner human life, our mind, emotions, personality, memories, desires, and moral choices. It is the seat of our individuality, shaping how we experience ourselves and interact with the world around us.

The **spirit** (Hebrew *ruach,* Greek *pneuma)* is the God-breathed dimension of our being, created to commune directly with our Creator. It is the spiritual core where we perceive God, hear His promptings, and respond to His grace. The soul expresses our earthly humanity; the spirit expresses our connection to the divine.

When the Apostle Paul writes about living "according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:4), he urges us to let God's Holy Spirit lead and renew our inner human spirit, rising above the fragile limitations of the flesh.

Think of it this way: **Our soul** feels the full weight of human existence, the grief, joy, affection, and anxiety. **Our spirit** reaches upward to God for strength, peace, and renewal when the soul grows weary.

While my loss at my father's passing pales in comparison to Spafford's tragedies, it still struck me deeply. My dad was my mentor and my hero. He embodied what the ideal Christian man should be, with his faith, his love, his dedication, and his resolve. His passing hurt me to my very core.

The only relief I was able to find was knowing that he was with God. My **soul** felt the full weight of that grief, but my **spirit** found peace in knowing he was with the Lord.

That personal experience helps explain why Spafford's hymn continues to move all of us so deeply. His soul knew a grief beyond words, yet his spirit clung fast to Christ. Out of that sacred connection came a song that has steadied generations of believers through life's fiercest storms.

When the troubles of this world overwhelm the soul, may our spirit rise in faith and declare:

"It is well… it is well with my soul."

John C. Perry is the Lay Leader Emeritus with New Life Methodist Church. They meet every Sunday at 9 a.m. (Bible Study) and 10 a.m. (Worship Service) at 1245 Williams Road in Salado.

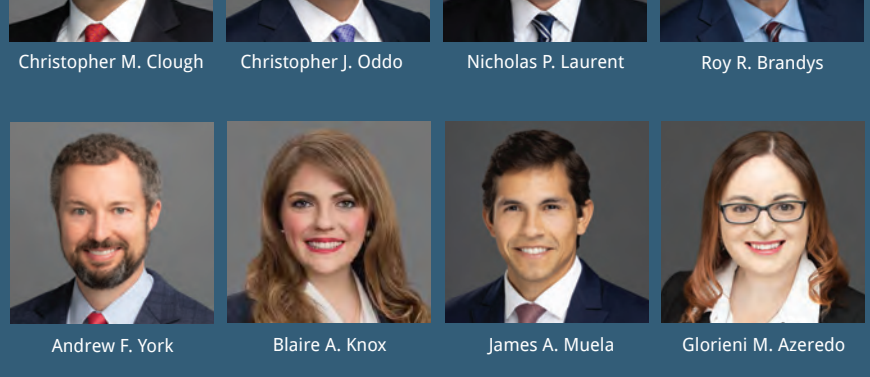




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SPORTS



Following first win, Belton turns focus to road test at Bryan

By Tony Adams
Belton Journal

The Belton Tigers celebrated plenty over the weekend but cut the festivities short as they went back to work on Monday in preparation for their Thursday night road trip against the Bryan Vikings at Merrill Green Stadium.

Kickoff is slated for 7 pm.

Belton's 39-17 win over Hendrickson last Friday was loaded full of big plays.

The connection between Will Shepard and Gavin Ross produced 116 yards and a touchdown, Javid Nua Planz ran for 117 yards on 15 carries and two touchdowns, and the offensive line opened holes for both offensive facets.

The defense combined for nine tackles for loss and 11 quarterback hurries. Azian Wilkinson had 14 tackles, Kainyn Smith had two sacks and four quarterback hurries, and Alex Carpenter had a clutch-time interception.

Joshua Pascoe added two field goals, and the special teams added a two-point conversion of a swinging-gate alignment.

"It was a complete team effort," Belton head coach Joshua Mann said. "They have worked so hard to get to this point. I appreciated seeing the frustration on some of their faces knowing that they could have played better. But the joy they have playing for each other and playing for the community, that's number one thing, and the reason that I came here."

The Tigers' focus is now squarely on the Bryan Vikings, an opponent that used to be a staple on the Belton football schedule. However, Belton and Bryan have not seen each other since Oct. 21, 2021, as part of a District 12-6A battle where the Tigers outlasted the Vikings in overtime, 21-14.

Shepard (20-of-24, 203 yards, 2 TDs, 134 QB rating) will get the start at quarterback. Planz (15-117 rushing yards, 2 TDs) will start at running back with Brody Lee (6-47) and Nash Jordan (4-23) subbing in as needed. Ross (10 catches, 116 yards, TD) will be the primary receiver, with Josh Brown (45 receiving yards), Cason Morton (17 receiving yards, TD), Planz, and Evan Echipare getting turns in the patterns.







BELTON JOURNAL/Tony Adams

Up front in the defense, Smith and Oakley Torres will be two cogs in the Tigers' front seven that will force the Vikings out of the pocket. Wilkinson will be on patrol in the secondary.

The Vikings are coming off a rough home loss to Magnolia West, 56-24. The Bulldogs outgained Bryan, 516-314.

Aiden Vaca was 9-of-15 for 92 yards. Robert Bryan rushed for 89 yards and a touchdown, and Robert Bryan added 89 rushing yards, a rushing touchdown and passing touchdown to Ashten Goosby.

Cedrick Wade and Easton Charanza (six tackles apiece) are solid contributors in the secondary. The Vikings' front seven will go up against the tough Tigers' front line.

The biggest improvement for a team comes between games one and two. The short-week road test in Bryan will be another cross examination for the Tigers in all three facets.

"Bryan will be another good test for us," Mann said. "I am fired up about a short week because that is what we will face in the playoffs. What a great test for us to face in non-district. It is another opportunity to see how we handle pressure. We are going to get after it."

Lady Broncos host Ellison on Friday in non-district finale

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

This is the final preparation.

After months of offseason training and a whirlwind, 25-match outburst during the first three weeks of the schedule, the Lady Broncos' last opportunity for adjustments has arrived.

Lake Belton hosts Killeen Ellison on Friday at 6:30 p.m. in its penultimate contest ahead of Tuesday's District 12-6A debut against visiting Killeen Harker Heights. First serve is set for 6 p.m.

Although the ultimate goal is to win in league play, the Lady Broncos intend to take momentum into the 12-match slate by defeating the Lady Eagles, but to do so, they will need to snap a losing skid.

At last weekend's Joshua tournament, Lake Belton lost three of four contests before suffering a defeat at Lorena on Tuesday.

The Lady Broncos opened their tournament stay in dramatic fashion, outlasting the Glen Rose in five sets with a 27-25, 25-20, 15-25, 16-25, 15-10 behind Gracie Lott's 14 kills. The showing was complemented by teammate Ava Wood's 10 kills.

Additionally, Kamryn Daniels finished with 19 assists and 11 digs, Kylie Morganroth had 14 assists, and Haylee Kasner had 15 digs.

It was Lake Belton's lone win, though.

In the following encounter, North Crowley earned a 25-19, 25-18, 25-15 win despite five kills from both Kaleileana Cress and Wood, while Daniels delivered 17 assists.

The following day, the Lady Broncos lost to the host Lady Owls (25-8, 25-22, 25-14) and Midlothian Heritage (25-23, 25-15, 25-19).

Cress recorded 11 kills in the first match, and Daniela finished with eight kills and 11 digs in the follow-up. Both players landed on the all-tournament team.

Then, on Tuesday, Lake Belton fell to the Lady Leopards in another tie-breaker, losing 25-12, 21-25, 24-26, 25-18, 15-10.

With the defeat, the Lady Broncos' record dropped to 10-15 heading into their encounter with former league rival Ellison.

The Lady Eagles are 15-10.

Once district play starts, Lake Belton immediately faces district favorites.

The Lady Knights won 23 of their first 30 matches, and the Lady Broncos follow by traveling to Killeen Chaparral (21-7) on Sept. 11.

Copperas Cove, Temple, Waco Midway and Bryan are also in the league.

Lake Belton seeks strong start in 6A as McNeil looks to rebound







BELTON JOURNAL/Tony Adams

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

Fresh off a 58-27 statement win at home over Vista Ridge, Lake Belton hits the road this week for a Class 6A matchup against the Round Rock McNeil Mavericks, who are looking to steady themselves after a lopsided 62-14 loss to Bowie last week.

Both programs are breaking in new head coaches this season. While Lake Belton's Kirk Rogers opened his tenure with a 38-14 halftime lead and a complete performance on both sides of the ball, McNeil's Jerry Gardner is still working to find that same rhythm. Gardner arrives at McNeil after serving as offensive coordinator at Wylie East and inherits a Mavericks program coming off a 6-4 season that included a 5-3 mark in district play. McNeil returns just 10 total lettermen from that squad, only one starter on offense and four on defense, meaning Gardner is rebuilding on the fly while trying to install a new system.

The one piece of continuity for McNeil is running back Zylen Hall, who rushed for 703 yards and six touchdowns last season and figures to be the focal point of the offense again. Senior Orion Covault takes over at quarterback for the Mavericks, tasked with getting a retooled offense up to speed against a Lake Belton defense that flew around the field a week ago. Defensively, McNeil brings back some experience at the second level in safety Kaden Kerney and linebacker Tyson Cox, who combined for 142 tackles last season and will need to be around the ball early and often if the Mavericks hope to slow down a Lake Belton offense that scored on nearly every possession in Week 1.

That offense will be difficult for anyone to contain right now. Junior quarterback Jessiah James threw for 298 yards and four touchdowns against Vista Ridge, all of them to senior receiver Zion Harness, who piled up 257 yards on just four catches. Junior running back James Maiwo added 261 yards and three scores on only 14 carries. If that trio is anywhere near as efficient against a McNeil defense breaking in new starters, it could be a long night for the Mavericks.

Lake Belton's defense showed plenty of teeth in Week 1 as well,

See **LAKE**, *Page B3*

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Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

District 16-5A team tennis competition continues for Belton next week as the Tigers and Lady Tigers host Waco University on Tuesday at 8 a.m.

The match will occur on the heels of Friday's trip to Pflugerville Weiss, where the teams will play at 4:30 p.m.

Lake Belton's District 12-6A schedule resumes Tuesday against visiting Temple.

New Tech will face Lampasas at Mary Hardin-Baylor today as it begins play in District 25-4A. The match is set to start at 4 p.m.

BASKETBALL

The Broncos and Lady Broncos recently released their schedules for the upcoming season.

Lake Belton's girls season starts Nov. 10 at Killeen Ellison, and the Lady Broncos will take part in tournaments at Leander Rouse (Nov. 12-14), Cibolo (Nov. 24-25) and Waco Midway (Dec. 28-29). They open District 12-6A play Dec. 15 at home against Midway.

The Broncos open with games versus the Austin Royals on Dec. 10 and Dec. 12, and they will participate in the Austin Lehman tournament (Dec. 3-5), the San Antonio ISD tournament (Dec. 10-12) and the Buda Hays tournament (Dec. 28-29).

Lake Belton's district opener is Jan 2 at Temple.

The first day for practice is Oct. 21 for girls and Oct. 28 for boys.

ATHLETICS PASS

Family athletic passes for the current school year are on sale and can be purchased at the Belton High School athletic complex or the BISD administration offices.

The pass admits the holder and immediate family into all home games conducted by BISD. It is accepted for all sports except football.

Cost is $100.

Cash or credit card is accepted for purchases made at Belton High School, while cash is required for purchases at the administration offices.

BOOSTER CLUB

The Belton Tiger Athletic Booster Club is currently accepting memberships for the current school year.

Contributions benefit all athletes across all sports for the entire school year with options for both community and corporate memberships. Benefits vary based on memberships.

For the community, Cub ($75), White ($150), Red ($300) and Varsity ($500) options are available, while corporate options are Tiger ($1,250), Elite ($3,000) and Legacy ($5,000).

Payments for memberships can be made online at BeltonTigersABC.org, through Venmo by using the handle @ BeltonTigers-ABC or by sending via mail to BTABC, PO Box 1454, Belton, TX, 76513.

For more information, visit BeltonAthletics.com or BeltonTigersABC.org.

RUNNING

Registration for the Lions on the Leon Captain "D" Dash for Sight is open until race day Oct. 3.

Hosted by the Belton Lions Club, the five-kilometer race will be held at Heritage Park beginning at 8:30 a.m. An opening ceremony will start at 8:15 a.m.

The event will begin and end at the Lions Pavillion.

Awards will be given to the top three finishers in each age group, and an award will be given to the best pirate costume.

The race proceeds help provide eye exams and glasses for those in need, and donations of used glasses will be accepted for recycling.

BELTON ISD ATHLETICS

Tigers Fall to East View 3-1, face tough test at China Spring

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

The Belton Tigers volleyball team came up short in a four set battle with Georgetown East View on Tuesday, dropping the match 3-1 and falling to 6-14 on the season.

Belton opened strong, taking the first set 25-22 behind a competitive back and forth that saw the Tigers close it out late. But East View responded by taking control of the match, winning the second set 25-17 and the third 25-18 to put Belton on the brink. The Tigers made a push in the fourth set, keeping the match within reach deep into the frame, but East View closed it out 20-18 to secure the win and take the match 3-1.

The split set start showed flashes of what Belton is capable of, particularly in that opening set, but the Tigers weren't able to find the same consistency once East View settled in. Stringing together sustained runs has been the difference in a number of close matches for Belton this season, and Tuesday's loss followed a similar pattern of competitive stretches undone by lulls that let the opponent pull away.

At 6-14, Belton will look to right the ship quickly, with a trip to China Springs on September 4. The matchup presents a significant step up in competition. China Spring enters at 21-5 overall and has been one of the hotter teams in the area of late, winning four of its last five matches. That kind of form makes China Spring a tough draw for a Belton squad still searching for consistency, but it's also the type of matchup that can serve as a measuring stick for how far this Tigers team has come.

Belton will need to carry over the composure it showed in that first set win over East View if it hopes to compete with a China Spring team playing with confidence right now. Cleaning up the lapses that let East View seize control in sets two and three will be the priority in practice this week. The Tigers have shown they can win sets against solid competition, but doing it four times in a row remains the challenge.

The Tigers will Travel to China Spring on September 4, looking to snap out of their recent skid and get back in the win column against a team riding momentum of its own. With over half the season still ahead, matches like this one will go a long way in determining where Belton lands by the time district play rounds into form.



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After strong outings at Temple, Belton ISD schools set to run at Lampasas

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Broncos delivered an impressive performance, but nobody could compete with Salado.

With all five of its scoring runners placing among the field's top 25, Lake Belton defeated all opponents at Friday's Temple Pro-Fit Invitational except the Eagles.

Following a fourth-place finish at last year's University Interscholastic League Class 4A state meet, Salado elevated itself into the Class 5A-6A division and dominated.

Behind individual champion Seth Anderson, who completed the three-mile course at Temple's James Wilson Park in 15 minutes, 38.35 seconds, and bronze-medalist senior teammate Daniel Anderson (3rd, 16:31.47), the Eagles were not threatened, capturing the team title with 32 points.

The Broncos immediately followed the area powerhouse in the final standings, scoring 86 points to place as the runner-up.

Wyatt Potts, a senior, led the unit, crossing the finish line in 17:20.82 to place 11th, and the outing was complemented by junior Tyler Adkins-Beltran (14th, 17:51.83). Accounting for the remainder of Lake Belton's points were senior Jack McCullagh (15th, 17:56.04), sophomore Drew Houston (22nd, 18:11.60) and senior Josiah Briggs (24th, 18:16.00).

Additionally, junior Cooper Schels (29th, 18:23.29), senior Adrian Rentas-Quiles (51st, 19:14.02), junior Kyan Whitmire (69th, 19:46.71) and junior Anthony Garza (71st, 19:51.65) represented Lake Belton, but their times did not count toward the team total.

District 12-6A rival Harker Heights (3rd, 93), Liberty Hill (4th, 111) and Liberty Hill Legacy Ranch (5th, 135) rounded out the top five.

Belton was seventh, scoring 185 points thanks to the combination of freshman Ethan Bass (23rd, 18:13.04), sophomore Ethan Trevino (27th, 18:20.19), senior Jose Perez-Diaz (40th, 18:51.87), junior Marcus Hernandez (55th, 19:25.45) and senior Zander Orsag (63rd, 19:34.49).

Tigers senior Hayden Brown (74th, 19:58.93), sophomore Noah Majano (78th, 20:04.41), senior Ezra Kahler (79th, 20:05.44), freshman Nelson Funez (90th, 20:55.22) and freshman Ares Henderson (91st, 20:55.32) also raced.

Salado delivered an even more one-sided showing in the girls Class 5A-6A division, where freshman Isabel Motley (1st, 18:13.32) was the first of four Lady Eagles to finish atop the standings.

As a result, Salado won with a mere 16 points — one shy of a perfect score.

Liberty Hill (2nd, 60), Lorena (3rd, 90) and Lake Belton (4th, 106) followed.

Scoring for the Lady Broncos were sophomore Keira Dzenowski, who cracked the top 10 with an eighth-place time of 20:04.36, senior Jenna Benedick (17th, 21:11.28), sophomore Demi Fisher (26th, 21:40.87), freshman Amara Bodeman (32nd, 22:01.06) and junior Lucy Loa (36th, 22:11.77).

The senior duo of Madelyn Rivas (40th, 22:19.99) and Sarah Gray (41st, 22:22.83), junior Elizabeth Sandlin (48th, 23:03.38), sophomore Sophia Garza (51st, 23:18.23) and junior Alayna Fulton (52nd, 23:27.30) completed Lake Belton's roster.

Belton was seventh (193).

Placing 37th (22:15.64), sophomore Ayla Wakershauser paced the Lady Tigers' scoring quintet, and she was followed by senior Nataly Valdez (44th, 22:55.83), junior Isabella Warner (49th, 23:09.05), freshman Kate Jones (55th, 23:33.44) and sophomore Natalie Mott (61st, 23:47.11).

The remaining Belton harriers were freshman Markayla Allen (69th, 24:28.11), senior Roxanna Delgado (70th, 24:32.64), sophomore Ella Johnson (72nd, 24:45.25), sophomore Leimya Palomares (76th, 24:58.88), freshman Ava Boeselt (78th, 25:09.51), senior Giselle MacDonald (82nd, 25:34.25), junior Lilian Baggett (83rd, 25:50.87), senior Fancy Jaime (85th, 26:26.11) and junior Ai Kirkland (91st, 27:48.87).

In the Class 1A-4A race, the Lady Dragons were 18th (517).

Ellie Megoulloa, a sophomore, had the team's best time, placing 74th (16:18.740) on the two-mile route.

The four other scorers were freshman Nyla Mathews (108th, 17:27.29), junior Daniella Idumebor (124th, 18:25.58), freshman Julisa Bedolla-Martinez (132nd, 22:01.11) and freshman Melyann Tort-Negron (136th, 24:20.42).

The Dragons did not field a complete team, and freshman Daniel Zubaty (90th, 21:00.46) was the team' s first finisher. He was joined by sophomores Abel Carey (128th, 23:09.68) and David Martinez (136th, 24:07.81) and senior Desmond Long (144th, 26:07.65).

All three schools return to action Friday at the Lampasas Floyd Farms Invitational.

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Lake - From Page B1

with senior linebacker Gavin Carpenter, sophomore Alexander Carter and senior Khirque Roberts all making disruptive plays up front. That group will be tested differently this week against a McNeil offense leaning heavily on Hall and an inexperienced line, but early returns suggest defensive coordinator Mark McMillan's unit is ahead of schedule.

Kickoff is set for Friday September 4 at 7 at Kelly Reeves Athletic Complex, and for a Lake Belton team that hasn't shown a weakness yet, the only real question is whether McNeil can find one before it's too late.

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LEGALS

TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

EXAMPLE A
NOTICE OF RECEIPT OF APPLICATION AND INTENT TO OBTAIN AIR PERMIT (NORI) RENEWAL PERMIT NUMBER 23465

APPLICATION. American Spincast, Inc. has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for renewal of Air Quality Permit Number 23465, which would authorize continued operation of a centrifugal alloy casting foundry located at 2505 Taylors Valley Road, Belton, Bell County, Texas 76513. **AVISO DE IDIOMA ALTERNATIVO**. El aviso de idioma alternativo en espanol está disponible en https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/air/newsourcereview/airpermits-pendingpermit-apps. This link to an electronic map of the site or facility's general location is provided as a public courtesy and not part of the application or notice. For exact location, refer to application. https://gisweb.tceq.texas.gov/LocationMapper/?marker=-97.428333,31.049444&level=13.
The existing facility is authorized to emit the following air contaminants: carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, organic compounds, particulate matter including particulate matter with diameters of 10 microns or less and 2.5 microns or less and sulfur dioxide.

This application was submitted to the TCEQ on August 7, 2026. The application will be available for viewing and copying at the TCEQ central office, TCEQ Waco regional office, and the Lena Armstrong Public Library, 301 East 1st Avenue, Belton, Bell County, Texas beginning the first day of publication of this notice. The facility's compliance file, if any exists, is available for public review in the Waco regional office of the TCEQ. The application, including any updates, is available electronically at the following webpage: https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/air/airpermit-applications-notices

The executive director has determined the application is administratively complete and will conduct a technical review of the application. Information in the application indicates that this permit renewal would not result in an increase in allowable emissions and would not result in the emission of an air contaminant not previously emitted. **The TCEQ may act on this application without seeking further public comment or providing an opportunity for a contested case hearing if certain criteria are met.**

PUBLIC COMMENT. **You may submit public comments to the Office of the Chief Clerk at the address below.** The TCEQ will consider all public comments in developing a final decision on the application and the executive director will prepare a response to those comments. Issues such as property values, noise, traffic safety, and zoning are outside of the TCEQ's jurisdiction to address in the permit process.

OPPORTUNITY FOR A CONTESTED CASE HEARING. You may request a contested case hearing if you are a person who may be affected by emissions of air contaminants from the facility. If requesting a contested case hearing, you must submit the following: (1) your name (or for a group or association, an official representative), mailing address, daytime phone number; (2) applicant's name and permit number; (3) the statement "[I/we] request a contested case hearing;" (4) a specific description of how you would be adversely affected by the application and air emissions from the facility in a way not common to the general public; (5) the location and distance of your property relative to the facility; (6) a description of how you use the property which may be impacted by the facility; and (7) a list of all disputed issues of fact that you submit during the comment period. If the request is made by a group or association, one or more members who have standing to request a hearing must be identified by name and physical address. The interests the group or association seeks to protect must also be identified. You may also submit your proposed adjustments to the application/permit which would satisfy your concerns.

The deadline to submit a request for a contested case hearing is 15 days after newspaper notice is published. If a request is timely filed, the deadline for requesting a contested case hearing will be extended to 30 days after mailing of the response to comments.

If any requests for a contested case hearing are timely filed, the Executive Director will forward the application and any requests for a contested case hearing to the Commissioners for their consideration at a scheduled Commission meeting. Unless the application is directly referred to a contested case hearing, the executive director will mail the response to comments along with notification of Commission meeting to everyone who submitted comments or is on the mailing list for this application. The Commission may only grant a request for a contested case hearing on issues the requester submitted in their timely comments that were not subsequently withdrawn. If a hearing is granted, the subject of a hearing will be limited to disputed issues of fact or mixed questions of fact and law relating to relevant and material air quality concerns submitted during the comment period. Issues such as property values, noise, traffic safety, and zoning are outside of the Commission's jurisdiction to address in this proceeding.

MAILING LIST. In addition to submitting public comments, you may ask to be placed on a mailing list for this application by sending a request to the Office of the Chief Clerk at the address below. Those on the mailing list will receive copies of future public notices (if any) mailed by the Office of the Chief Clerk for this application.

AGENCY CONTACTS AND INFORMATION.
All public comments and requests must be submitted either electronically at www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eComment/, or in writing to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Office of the Chief Clerk, MC-105, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087. Please be aware that any contact information you provide, including your name, phone number, email address and physical address will become part of the agency's public record. For more information about the permitting process, please call the TCEQ Public Education Program, Toll Free, at 1-800-687-4040 or visit their website at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/pep. Si desea información en Español, puede llamar al
1-800-687-4040. You can also view our website for public participation opportunities at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/participation.

Further information may also be obtained from American Spincast, Inc., 2505 Taylors Valley Road, Belton, Texas 76513-9622 or by calling Mr. Venkata Godasi, Graduate Engineer, AARC Environmental Inc. at (713) 974-2272.
Notice Issuance Date: August 14, 2026
09.03

CITATION BY PUBLICATION
THE STATE OF TEXAS
TO: RANDY LOREDO RODRIGUEZ, 5419 DENMANS LOOP, BELTON, TX 78513-4764 PER THE ORDER FOR SUBSTITUTE SERVICE TRCP 106 (B) OR WHEREVER HE MAY BE FOUND
Greetings:
YOU (AND EACH OF YOU) ARE HEREBY COMMANDED to appear before the County Court At Law #2 of Hidalgo County at the Courthouse being located at 100 N. Closner, in the City of Edinburg, Hidalgo County, Texas, by filing a written answer at or before 10 o'clock A.M. of the first Monday next after the expiration of forty-two days from the date of the issuance of this citation, the date for answer being the 17th day of September, 2026 to Plaintiff's Petition filed in said Court, on the 9th day of September, 2025, in this cause, numbered CL-21-2173-B on the docket of said Court and styled
LACKS VALLEY STORES, LTD. vs. RANDY LOREDO RODRIGUEZ
A brief statement of the name of this suit is as follows, to-wit:* CONTRACT - OTHER CONTRACT (OCA)
The officer executing this writ shall promptly serve the same according to requirements of law, and the mandates hereof, and make due return as the law directs.
Witness, ARTURO GUAJARDO, JR., Clerk of the County Court(s) of Hidalgo County, Texas. Issued and given under my hand and the seal of said Court at office this the 6th day of August, 2026.
ARTURO GUAJARDO, JR. , COUNTY CLERK, HIDALGO COUNTY, TEXAS, 100 N. CLOSNER
EDINBURG, TEXAS 78539, COUNTY COURT AT LAW #2
By: LORENA PEREZ Deputy

NOTICE
You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney's do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10:00 A.M. on the Monday next following the expiration of forty-two days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you Plaintiff/Plaintiff's Attorney: JOSE W. HERNANDEZ, 206 W STUBBS ST EDINBURG TX 78539
* Here give brief statement of nature of suit, proper description of property, if any, and interest defendants are alleged to hold in said property, if they have an interest therein. See Rule 114, Rules of Civil Procedure. See Rule 115, Rules of Civil Procedure, where suit involves land.
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08.13,08.20,08.27, 09.3PD

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of Claude Leonard Johnson, Deceased, were issued on August 24, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00448, pending in the County Court-At-Law No: 1, Bell County, Texas, to: Theresa Ann Johnson Benford.
All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them to the undersigned within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. Estate of Claude Leonard Johnson, c/o: Theresa Ann Johnson Benford, 1801 Boydstun Lp., Killeen, Texas 76542
SIGNED on August 28, 2026.
Respectfully submitted, THE ZIMMERMAN LAW FIRM, P.C., By: /s/ Garrett L. Beach, Garrett L. Beach, State Bar No.: 24101493, 3501 W. Waco Dr., Waco, Texas 76710, Telephone: (254) 633-3333, Facsimile: (254) 752-9680 ,E-mail: gbeach@zlawhelp.com, Attorneys for Theresa Ann Johnson Benford
09.03

TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

NOTICE OF RECEIPT OF APPLICATION AND INTENT TO OBTAIN AIR PERMIT (NORI)
PROPOSED AIR QUALITY PERMIT NUMBER 185044

APPLICATION Michels Road & Stone, Inc., has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for: Issuance of Permit 185044

This application would authorize construction of the Rock Crushing Facility located at 16680 Moody Leon Road, Moody, Bell County, Texas 76557. This application is being processed in an expedited manner, as allowed by the commission's rules in 30 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 101, Subchapter J. This link to an electronic map of the site or facility's general location is provided as a public courtesy and not part of the application or notice. For exact location, refer to application. https://gisweb.tceq.texas.gov/LocationMapper/?marker=-97.453177,31.296751&level=13. The facility will emit the following contaminants: carbon monoxide, hazardous air pollutants, nitrogen oxides, organic compounds, particulate matter including particulate matter with diameters of 10 microns or less and 2.5 microns or less and sulfur dioxide.

This application was submitted to the TCEQ on August 18, 2026. The application will be available for viewing and copying at the TCEQ central office, the TCEQ Waco regional office, and the City of Temple Public Library, 100 West Adams Avenue #310, Temple, Bell County, Texas beginning the first day of publication of this notice. The facility's compliance file, if any exists, is available for public review in the Waco regional office of the TCEQ. The application, including any updates, is available electronically at the following webpage: https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/air/airpermit-applications-notices

The executive director has determined the application is administratively complete and will conduct a technical review of the application.

PUBLIC COMMENT. **You may submit public comments to the Office of the Chief Clerk at the address below.** The TCEQ will consider all public comments in developing a final decision on the application and the executive director will prepare a response to those comments.

PUBLIC MEETING. **You may request a public meeting to the Office of the Chief Clerk at the address below**. The purpose of a public meeting is to provide the opportunity to submit comments or ask questions about the application. A public meeting about the application will be held if requested by an interested person and the executive director determines that there is a significant degree of public interest in the application or if requested by a local legislator. A public meeting is not a contested case hearing.

After technical review of the application is complete, the executive director may prepare a draft permit and will issue a preliminary decision on the application. If a draft Air Quality Permit is prepared, a Notice of Application and Preliminary Decision is required and it will then be published and mailed to those who made comments, submitted hearing requests or are on the mailing list for this application and will contain the final deadline for submitting public comments.

OPPORTUNITY FOR A CONTESTED CASE HEARING You may request a contested case hearing if you are a person who may be affected by emissions of air contaminants from the facility. If requesting a contested case hearing, you must submit the following: (1) your name (or for a group or association, an official representative), mailing address, and daytime phone number; (2) applicant's name and permit number; (3) the statement "[I/we] request a contested case hearing"; (4) a specific description of how you would be adversely affected by the application and air emissions from the facility in a way not common to the general public; (5) the location and distance of your property relative to the facility; (6) a description of how you use the property which may be impacted by the facility; and (7) a list of all disputed issues of fact that you submit during the comment period. If the request is made by a group or an association, one or more members who have standing to request a hearing must be identified by name and physical address. The interests the group or association seeks to protect must also be identified. You may also submit your proposed adjustments to the application/permit which would satisfy your concerns.

The deadline to submit a request for a contested case hearing is 30 days after newspaper notice is published. If a request is timely filed, the deadline for requesting a contested case hearing will be extended to 30 days after the mailing of the response to comments.

If a hearing request is timely filed, following the close of all applicable comment and request periods, the Executive Director will forward the application and any requests for contested case hearing to the Commissioners for their consideration at a scheduled Commission meeting. The Commission may only grant a request for a contested case hearing on issues the requester submitted in their timely comments that were not subsequently withdrawn. **If a hearing is granted, the subject of a hearing will be limited to disputed issues of fact or mixed questions of fact and law relating to relevant and material air quality concerns submitted during the comment period**. Issues such as property values, noise, traffic safety, and zoning are outside of the Commission's jurisdiction to address in this proceeding.

MAILING LIST. In addition to submitting public comments, you may ask to be placed on a mailing list to receive future public notices for this specific application by sending a written request to the Office of the Chief Clerk at the address below.

AGENCY CONTACTS AND INFORMATION. All public comments and requests must be submitted either electronically at www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eComment/, or in writing to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Office of the Chief Clerk, MC-105, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087. Please be aware that any contact information you provide, including your name, phone number, email address and physical address will become part of the agency's public record. For more information about the permitting process, please call the TCEQ Public Education Program, Toll Free, at 1-800-687-4040 or visit their website at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/pep. Si desea información en Español, puede llamar al
1-800-687-4040. You can also view our website for public participation opportunities at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/participation.

Further information may also be obtained from Michels Road & Stone, Inc., 817 Main Street, Brownsville, Wisconsin 53006-1444 or by calling Ms. Mackenzie Klein, Environmental Coordinator at (920) 313-0050.

Notice Issuance Date: August 25, 2026 09.03





EDITORIAL

A revolution of words

My Front Porch • Lynette Sowell

By Lynette SowelWhen Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable type printing press in the mid 1400s, many scribes throughout Europe probably freaked out about their jobs. Until then, pretty much everything was handwritten by scribes who wrote on vellum, aka animal skin.

Europe went through a revolution because of the press and movable type, and that revolution affected the entire known world at that time.

But what about the scribes and the shrinking demand for their handwritten work. Was their business obsolete? What would a smart scribe do in order to earn a living?

Fast forward not quite 600 years and our generations have experienced a pixel revolution. Our world has become increasingly digital. But print still remains…

Until working for the newspaper, my exposure to the world of "paper" was limited to that of book publishing. With the advent of ebooks, things changed for print book publishers, and those publishers had to rethink the way they do business.

Years ago, I attended a writers' conference workshop with Allen Arnold, then senior vice president and publisher of Thomas Nelson's fiction division.

He addressed what publishers and publishing should do about the digital revolution that exploded around that time.

"We are not simply paper book publishers," I recall him saying. "We are information publishers. It is our job to provide that information, those books, to our readers in whatever form they would like to buy it."

Smart publishers don't fight the change, and like those scribes of old, they figure out a way to adapt to the changing formats. I think it's an exciting time to be a writer.

In fact, anyone can start an online "newspaper" and start sharing what they think is "news," when it's not really the news. Gullibility runs rampant on the Internet.

Those in the newspaper biz must understand that people get their news in other formats besides opening printed and folded pages. For some, there's no better way to get hometown news than in digital form. You can get your local newspaper on your mobile device first thing Tuesday and Friday mornings.

We will still have newspapers of record. There's something to be said about the "realness" of paper. When it's printed, it is that more real when so much about the digital world has become fake. Also, clippings of significant events in our lives never go out of style. There is nothing like someone seeing their name in print. Paper or pixels, it doesn't matter. Either way, you can still keep up with current events that mean something to you.

During the global pandemic, at times I found myself mentally exhausted with the amount of information in my news feed.

With all the information out there, wouldn't it be nice if you could get your news and information in one place? What if you miss a Facebook post, social media junkies? Also, how do you wade through screen after screen of information? Or reading the same thing because everyone feels they "must share."

My quote of the week is this, by Al Cross, director of the University of Kentucky's Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues:

"We practice journalism, which reports facts. To do that, we verify information or we attribute it to someone else. That is called the discipline of verification, and it is the essence of the news media. Social media [outlets] have no discipline, and hardly any verification, and they emphasize opinion. Newspapers separate fact from opinion, reserving our own views for the editorial page. Of course, our views influence what news we choose to cover, so if you think we're not covering what should be covered, or have failed to separate fact from opinion, or make another mistake, we want you to tell us."

Tangled

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

I love being the mom of adult kids. There's something about watching the people you loved and nurtured and cared for become kind, loving, productive people. It's a relief, considering I didn't have a clue what I was doing. I mostly faked it, with hope and prayers I didn't get things too terribly wrong. Seeing them emerge from the chrysalis and spread their beautiful, colorful wings fills me with a joy I can't describe.

It also makes me sad sometimes. Did I do my job too well? They don't need me anymore. Should I have tried a little harder to keep them dependent on me?

Kidding.

But it does feel nice when, every now and then, they let me know they still need their mom. That happened this summer, when we took a little whole-family trip to New Braunfels. The rental had lots of space for cooking and games, and the back yard had a swimming pool. Hours of Marco Polo and Keep Away and "Mom, watch this," and I was transported right back to their elementary school days.

One evening, after we'd all showered off the chlorine, my daughter came to me. "Mom, help. I can't get this knot out of my hair."

Sure enough, a big chunk of her silky blonde hair had tied itself into a tight knot. The kind that doesn't respond to a comb. The kind that broken hairs and broken hearts are made of. I honestly didn't know if I could help her without a pair of scissors.

But remember all those years of faking it? That part of me kicked back in. "Don't panic. Let's put conditioner on it." I didn't hold out much hope, but I figured dousing it in slick hair lotion couldn't hurt.

"Let that soak in for a while," I told her. "I'm going to blow dry my hair, and I'll check it when I'm finished." I hadn't really planned to dry my hair, but it was a good way to buy time.

Ten minutes later, she said, "Mom. Did you forget about me?"

"No. We need to give it more time."

"How much longer?"

"A few more minutes." I sounded confident. Like I know what I was talking about. In reality, I wasn't finished appealing to Almighty God for a miracle.

Finally, I grabbed a comb, told her to sit on the floor in front of me, and sent up one last silent plea. And what do you know? The knot slid right out. "Done," I said, after about 3.25 seconds.

"Wait, what? Really?"

"Really. I told you the conditioner would help."

I was elevated to hero status in my daughter's eyes for a good half hour.

That night, as I lay in our rented bed thinking about all the memories we'd made, I couldn't help but draw a parallel between the hair incident and my life. At times, my emotions have been knotted beyond repair. Years of pushing down trauma and bad experiences have left me all ratted up inside. I felt like the mess I'd made was beyond redemption, and I didn't know how to begin fixing it.

So I soaked it in prayer. I bathed it in God's Word. And I gave the Holy Spirit time to do His work. Slowly, He loosened the tangles. He smoothed out the rough spots. And he turned the chaos into something beautiful, peaceful, and good.

I've tried not to let things get that bad again, but sometimes, knots happen without our consent. Yet I've learned a consistent routine of prayer, reading God's Word, and doing what He says works like a steady conditioner, keeping my life silky and serene.

"I will go before you and make the rough places smooth," Isaiah 45:2

"Stand and Never Yield!"

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

To quote author Ben Thompson, "From both a military and a civilian capacity, it's hard to argue with the statement that Rick Rescorla is one of the greatest heroes in modern American history."

At the age of 16, Rescorla, a native of Cornwall in the United Kingdom, quit school to join the British military. After training as a paratrooper, he was sent to Cyprus, where he served in a military intelligence unit during the EOKA Cypriot Insurgency. From there, he was shipped off to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where he served as a paramilitary police inspector. While serving in both locations, he found himself engaged in direct combat with Communist-backed forces.

It was in Rhodesia that he met Dan Hill, an American mercenary helping to fight the insurgency. Hill convinced Rescorla to return with him to America and enlist in the military. Due to his prior military experience, after he finished basic training he was immediately sent to officer candidate school. Upon completion, he was assigned to the 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).

The 7th, in turn, was assigned to Ia Drang, the first major American battle of the war.

For most of the men under his command, it was their first taste of action. But Rescorla, by this time, was an experienced veteran. He knew what needed to be done, and he did it.

As he personally dug foxholes and cleared brush, Rescorla began singing a mix of old Cornish folk songs. This was the tonic his soldiers needed, as his calmness while performing even mundane duties under immediate threat of enemy action brought order and courage back to the unit. Not only did he and his men eventually repulse four large-scale North Vietnamese offensives within a two-hour period, as soon as the sun came up Rescorla (who had gone more than 48 hours without sleep) ordered his men to fix bayonets. The enemy forces were soon driven before them.

But this wasn't the end of the fighting for his unit. While his unit was being evacuated, Rescorla heard that the main body of the battalion was being hit by a heavy offensive. He responded by ordering the helicopter pilot to turn around so that he and his men could engage.

Rescorla ultimately retired from the Army Reserves in 1990, eventually becoming director of security for Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, which was headquartered in the World Trade Center. When a truck bomb hit the facility in 1993, Rescorla evacuated the offices; he was the last person out of the building.

Sadly, this proved to merely be a dress rehearsal for 9/11.

When the first plane hit, Rescorla went right back into action. He grabbed a bullhorn, went across all twenty floors of the company's offices, rallied the employees, and – despite being in his sixties and dying of cancer – led them down the stairs, once more signing old Cornish songs as he did so. He was last seen going back in to check for others when the tower went down. Of the 2,700 company employees who were there that day, all but 6 made it out.

Cyprus. Rhodesia. Vietnam. The World Trade Center. No matter the situation, he was a professional. His courage, skill, determination, and calmness in the face of grave danger ensured that thousands of others would live.

Godspeed.

"Men of Cornwall stop your dreaming,
Can't you see their spearpoints gleaming?,
See their warriors' pennants streaming,
To this battlefield. Men of Cornwall stand
ye steady, It cannot be ever said ye for
the battle were not ready Stand and never
yield!"

Random Ramblings

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

Have you ever wondered what the big deal is about "organic" eggs? I mean if you think of where they come from, what small difference does it make what the silly chicken ate?

And of all the birds we domesticated for egg production why did we pick the chicken? Certainly the turkey egg is better and larger. Or if you were on a low cholesterol diet you could stoop to mockingbird eggs.

I had a disgusting thing happen recently, and I apologize if you are eating breakfast while reading this account. I was driving in the recent, and welcome, rains, wipers going and nowhere to pull off the road. When a rather large bodied insect (genus and species available on request) flew up and got caught under my windshield wiper, about half way. So for the rest of my drive I watched this carcass go back and forth across my field of view. I am sure that the initial impact probably dispatched the poor creature, however his remains fouled my view for a while.

Have you ever wondered what a dog would say if they could talk? I am sure that a cat would say; "feed me", "pet me", and "leave me alone".

Have you ever noticed that no matter how many clocks you have in your house, within a couple of weeks most will have different times?

Why do people watch movies about plane crashes?

I was recently adding up all the savings that I should be realizing based on the claims for the home improvements that I have done to my house, and the power company should be sending me a check every month. So far that hasn't happened.

Have you ever wondered about evolution, the normal type not the type where we evolve from pond scum. I mean somewhere along the line a bird ended up in Africa with no trees, so it grew larger with strong legs to run. Now the irony is that we have never seen a bunny rabbit that could fly. Doesn't seem fair does it?

Has anyone thought about making sushi out of whale? I mean Eskimos like whale meat. And the best part, one whale could supply the entire sushi market, worldwide, for a couple of years.

Have you noticed in the old western movies and TV shows, after weeks out riding the trails and drinking bad coffee and pond water, the first thing that the cowboys want is a tiny glass of whiskey? Well not me, I would be asking for a gallon of clean water.

I was thinking the other day; what if colors didn't appear to everyone the same way. What if green appeared orange to someone else, and blue was actually red to them. I mean there would be no way to know and it would certainly seem natural. It could be happening and we would not know it.

Why do birds have feet and legs? I mean if I could fly, walking would be a thing of the past for me. What if a bird didn't have good depth perception and kept missing the power lines when he came in for a landing. Would all the other birds laugh at him?

Speaking of laughing, what if there was a hyena that had self esteem issues, would he think all the other hyenas in the pack were always laughing at him?

Do you know someone that uses the phrase; "strangest thing I have ever seen"? Do they really see a new "strangest" thing every day? I have seen a few strange things, it is rare that I see something that tops that.

That is about all the pondering for the week.

SEPTEMBER B-TOWN BULLETIN

Local Activities & Events

Bell County Retired School Employee Association- Sept 3 The Bell County Retired School Employee Association

(BCRSEA) will hold its first meeting of the 2026-2027 year on September 3. The organization has a new meeting location! Please join us at Fellowship Baptist Church, 2025 Morgan's Point Road, Belton. Refreshments and socialization will be-gin at 1:30 a.m., with the meeting beginning at 2:00 p.m. New members are always welcome. BCRSEA is an organization comprised of retired school personnel and other persons inter-ested in education. The purpose of the association is to encour-age members to use their talents, their training and experience in furthering the educational, social, and civic growth of the community, the state, and the nation, and to afford opportuni-ties for united action in solving problems relative to the needs of all retired school personnel. For more information, see our Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/BCRSEA).

Community Plant Swap - Sept 5

Belton Public Library Community Plant Swap is coming up, and we can't wait to see what you bring! Join us for a morning of trading plants, sharing tips, and connecting with fellow green thumbs. Come ready to swap and talk all things plant-related! Bring seeds, cutting or extra house plants to trade. 10:00 a.m. to noon at 301 E. 1st Ave, Belton.

Soggy Doggie Day - Sept 12

Pups help end the Splash Pad Season in Belton. Right after Har-ris Community Park's Splash Pad closes to humans for the sea-son, we fence it off and let dogs in! For more inforamtion and rules visit beltontexas.gov/departments/parks_and_recreation.

Bacon, Blues & Brews Festival - Sept 25-26

Belton's Bacon, Blues & Brews Festival is a celebration of great food, live music, and community spirit in the heart of downtown Belton. This festival brings together the smoky aroma of bacon-inspired creations, the soulful sounds of blues music, and a wide selection of craft brews and beverages for a day packed with flavor and fun. Enjoy performances from tal-ented musicians, explore unique vendors, sample bacon-themed dishes, and experience the welcoming atmosphere that makes Belton special. For more inforamtion visit beltontexas.gov

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) will meet both on TUESDAY, Aug. 11th and Aug. 25th at 6:30pm at the Tem-ple VA Hospital. Use the entrance on the Valet parking side of the hospital and take the elevator to the 5th floor -Conference Room 5G31. Both care-givers, supporters and those suffering from mental illness are welcome to join us for mutual support and sharing of information . For more information, call 254-771-3638.

Temple-Belton Ladies Lion Club Meeting Second and Fourth Monday of every month at 6:30 pm at the Belton V.F.W., 2311 S. Pearl St., Belton.

Bell Area Parkinson's Support group (BAPS-North) meets at CTCOG, 2180 N. Main St, Belton on the 2nd and 4th Fridays from 2:30-4:00 PM every month. All are welcome, and there is no membership cost. The Bell Area Parkinson's Support group (BAPS-West) meets at St. Andrews United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall, 206 W Fowler Ave, Killeen on the 1st and 3rd Fridays from 2:30-4:00 PM every month. For more information contact Gayle Shull at GayleInBelton@gmail.com or (254) 718-4197.

The Newcomers Club, Inc. would like to welcome ladies who have moved into Bell County and surrounding areas within the last three years. The club meets for a luncheon and program once a month and may participate in other various activities such as book clubs, a choral group, several dining out groups, walking, and games groups. The club also welcomes ladies who have just retired, or have experienced a life-changing event and are looking to connect with other ladies. For information about joining, contact Sheri Clifton at (602)-432-7510, or sherbear@bearhouse.us

Marine Corp League will meet the third Tuesday of each mont at VFW 3859. Dinner is served at 6:30 p.m. and metting will begin at 7:00 p.m. 201 VFW Dr, Harker heights, Tx 76548. Email commandant@mcl1249tx.comfor more inforamtion.

Aspen Hospice and Palliative Care Volunteers Needed Listed here are many ways you can help make a difference for our hos-pice patients. You can provide companionship, listen to music, read, reminisce, play games, cards, checkers, paint nails, apply makeup, curl hair or take them on walks. Please visit aspen-healthcare.net or call 512-856-5668 for more information.

Young's Daughters Funeral Home Dementia/Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group occurs weekly on Fridays from 6-7 p.m. This group allows your loved ones to join. Loved ones will be doing activities while the group of caregivers are joining together to better understand and learn tips and tricks for daily life. Young's Daughters Funeral and Bereavement Center is located at 4235 East Hwy 190 in Temple.

Bell County Historical Commission holds their meetings on the fourth Monday of every month at 6 p.m. in the historical Bell County Court House, 101 E. Central Ave in Belton. We are dedicated to initiating and conducting programs that pre-serve and celebrate the county's historic cultural resources in alignment with state laws governing historical preservation in Texas. Our community resources consist of a research room, book repository, cemetery information, historical markers and monument records. Our services include information on his-toric preservation, educational programming, history commu-nity outreach and partnerships. We welcome you to join other history minded folks and get involved by serving on one of our committees that consist of preservation, cemetery, markers and education. To volunteer or for more information please visit historicalcommission@bellcounty.texas.gov, call 254-933-5917 or visit the office located in the historic Bell County Court-house, 101 E. Central Ave., RM 117.

The Bell County Genealogical Society meets the fourth Saturday of each month. The group offers free Genealogy Guidance. Members of the Bell Coun-ty Genealogical Society will be present to help those with questions about researching their family trees. General meetings are held in the Bell County Museum, 201 North Main St., Belton, TX. All meetings are open to the public. You do not have to be from Bell County or have ancestors from Bell County to participate. For additional information please visit our website at https://txbcgs. org/home/events/

Pistons on the Creek will meet every third Friday from 5:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. Come down to Nolan Creek and show off your rides. From classic to modern, muscle, rat rod, exotic, all automotive enthusiasts are welcome. Support our awesome downtown businesses and restaurants surrounded by live music, food, drinks and a great atmosphere.

Bell Fine Arts Visitors welcome Wednesday's from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 306 E 5th Ave in Belton. If you have a desire to meet, learn, and work together with those of similiar interests or just curious, come visit with us and see what we are about. Mah Jong games are available every Monday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Come join the fun and meet new folks. For more information text Jeanne at 409-313-0611 or just come by.

Local chapter of the Crochet Guild of America meets from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Wednesdays at the Lena Armstrong Public Library, 301 E. First St., in Belton. The group is open to anyone interested in crochet. All skill levels are welcome. For information email Betty Reichert at bettyreichert@yahoo.com or Kathy Bement at katshookand needle@gmail.com. Anyone interested in join-ing the local chapter of the Crochet Guild of America will also need to join the National Crochet Guild of America. Visit www.crochet.org for details.

Bell County Texas Democratic Women holds their monthly meeting on the third Saturday of each month at 10 a.m. in the Belton AgriLife Center, 1605 N Main in Belton. Join us to hear from local and state candidates and about im-portant issues and events. This is open to the public.

Leadership Belton is an excellent source for learning leadership skills. This 10-month program focuses on three key elements: community awareness train-ing, leadership training, and team building. Do you have someone ready to take the next step to become a leader? If so, Leadership Belton is here to make that difference. For more information on how to participate, contact the chamber at 254-939-3551 or e-mail at info@beltonchamber.com.

Community Information

TAKE ME HOME PROGRAM The Belton Police Department is adopting the Take Me Home Program, aimed at helping individuals who need special assistance to return safely home after getting lost. database with photos and personal information to someone who is lost or wandered away from home. find someone who wandered away from home is designed for individuals and including necessary including those with Dementia, Autism or specific medical health needs. It's free to register someone and data is kept confidential to first responders. You can sign up a loved one here: www.beltontexas You can sign up a loved one here: www.beltontexas.gov/takemehome or find out the program here: https://www.beltontexas.gov/news_detail_T11_R1166.php.

SCAN TO REGISTER

Dial 988 for Mental Health Emergencies To help those contemplating suicide, press option 1 for assistance with military/veteran population.

Text-to-911 for speech/ hearing impaired, those unable to call or speak due to home invasion, abduction or domestic violence or physically incapable. Providing location, city name and nature of the emergency in the first message is imperative. For further education on this service, don't hesitate to call 254-933-5500.

Citizens Helping in Police Service (CHIPS) are extra eyes and ears while in areas where large groups may gather. Contact the Belton Police Dept. to join.

Belton Citizens Police Academy meets Thursday nights to enhance police and community partnerships. Apply online to be a part of this exciting program.

Slam the Scam Throughout the year, we give you the tools to recognize scams and stop scammers from stealing your money and personal information. Share the information with your loved ones & Slam the Scam! Visit ssa.gov/scam for tips.

Dementia/Alzheimers Support Group- Young's Daughters Funeral Home & Bereavement Center, 4235 E. US HWY 190 in Temple. Fridays from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Join us for activities while caregivers discuss and help each other during this difficult time. Call Sabrina at 254-401-1302

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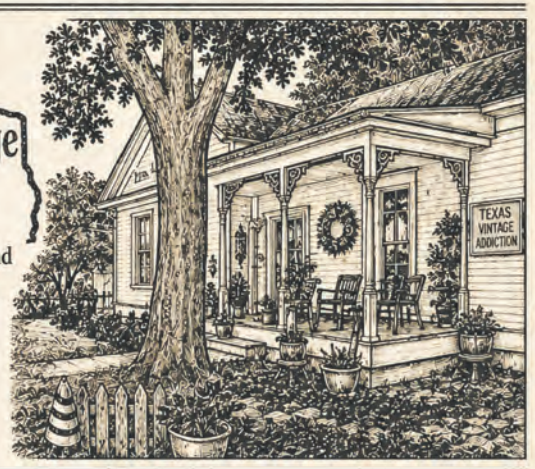


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M	H	R	F	D	I	V	K	K	G	N	K	L	Z	M	R	F	K	Z	A
K	F	H	T	N	A	R	B	I	V	T	S	K	H	E	U	W	I	D	A
W	K	D	N	C	I	N	N	A	M	O	N	K	T	Z	Y	V	R	I	S
P	T	I	H	I	K	S	Y	G	W	C	Q	A	R	Z	R	L	E	Q	G
X	S	W	E	U	K	T	E	E	Y	Q	E	S	O	Q	F	K	X	W	T
T	E	D	D	N	S	P	A	M	T	W	W	C	C	U	Y	W	L	S	H
S	V	Q	I	O	I	L	M	T	S	H	G	F	L	A	N	N	E	L	L
L	R	M	R	M	W	G	E	U	T	M	G	G	N	V	W	M	Y	L	G
E	A	F	Y	H	G	Q	K	N	P	Q	R	N	O	E	D	G	F	P	A
Z	H	S	A	M	U	F	B	I	O	S	X	N	X	G	M	F	Z	H	B
X	P	Y	H	I	T	A	C	O	R	N	V	W	N	A	I	S	U	A	Q
K	A	C	N	X	L	W	Q	X	T	Y	V	C	H	I	L	L	Y	U	C
O	R	O	E	E	B	Y	I	Q	S	A	H	B	G	L	H	K	Z	T	A
M	X	T	A	R	A	O	K	L	L	C	P	I	N	O	Y	Y	U	U	D
R	E	V	M	L	I	Q	C	G	I	H	A	E	N	F	N	E	V	M	E
P	E	Z	B	Y	A	F	F	B	F	G	D	R	S	O	N	V	K	N	K
S	Z	R	E	P	X	A	N	Z	G	L	H	Z	L	M	N	Q	X	Z	B
I	S	A	R	E	P	E	O	O	O	U	T	T	B	E	P	Z	Q	K	C
R	Q	W	U	Z	R	Y	M	G	B	W	W	Y	H	U	T	Q	Z	T	T
C	K	Z	M	I	Y	B	F	R	R	A	S	L	C	I	D	E	R	W	L

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

ACORN
AMBER
AUTUMN
BONFIRE
BREEZE
CHILLY
CIDER
CINNAMON
COZY
CRISP
EQUINOX
FLANNEL
FOLIAGE
FROSTY
GOLDEN
HARVEST
HAYRIDE
LEAVES
NUTMEG
PUMPKIN
SCARLET
SWEATER
TWILIGHT
VIBRANT